

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Flexsteel Industries Incorporated

#### Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Flexsteel Expands Operations and Adds Jobs

##### Client Profile:

Flexsteel Industries, Inc. began operations in 1893 and produces home furniture, recreational vehicle and marine seating and commercial seating. The company, which recently topped \$280 million in sales, is known for its blue steel seat spring. The Dublin facility opened in 1983 and currently employs 395 people.

##### Situation:

In 2003, Flexsteel Industries decided to expand its manufacturing and warehousing space by 56,000 square feet, bringing the total to approximately 330,000 square feet. Before ever lifting one piece of furniture, new homeowners visualize where certain large items should go. Likewise, when preparing for a plant expansion, designers of manufacturing facilities plan ahead for where production lines and large equipment should be located. With this issue facing Flexsteel Industries, the company contacted the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

##### Solution:

Alan Barfoot, EDI lean specialist and central Georgia region manager, visited the plant along with Co-op Students Nancy Cauley and Marc Erwin. Together they went through the entire plant layout and looked at space utilization, work flow, processes, material handling and shipping warehouse. "We were actually doing a new layout of the whole plant because we were moving some departments to another area and vice versa," says Marcia Dixon, general manager of Flexsteel in Dublin. "There were some real basic issues as to how best store materials throughout the plant. We were trying to use 'just-in-time' inventory processes more than we had in the past." Barfoot and his team determined how Flexsteel could minimize its materials inventory and improve storage of what it needed to keep the plant going. Several meetings between Flexsteel and EDI staff resulted in plant layout drawings that provided recommendations for optimal space utilization. "Along with Flexsteel management, we developed a strategy to re-align their processes," says Barfoot. "We looked at the best way to arrange the plant, including raw materials storage and a lean flow." Dixon says that the company implemented EDI's proposal and moved into the new space in mid-December 2003.

##### Results:

- \* Improved space utilization and workflow.
- \* Created 35 new jobs.
- \* Reduced costs.
- \* Increased sales by 28 percent.

##### Testimonial:

[www.mep.nist.gov](http://www.mep.nist.gov)



NIST is an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department's Technology Administration

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

"Our employees were impressed with Georgia Tech's work in the Dublin facility. Some engineers from other Flexsteel plants were down here and commented on what a great service the Georgia Tech program is to the state of Georgia. The Georgia Tech staff listened to the issues and our concerns. They would tell us what would work and what wouldn't, and if it wouldn't work, they went back to the drawing board and came back to us with new ideas."

Marcia Dixon, General Manager